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ABSTRACT

Five current social studies methods textbooks were examined to determine how writing and literature are presented to prospective teachers. The results of the examination show that only one of the methods textbooks offered a positive and informative explanation of how literature can be used to learn the social studies. Three of the textbooks were viewed as recognizing the importance of writing, although only two offered sufficient information and examples of how it might actually be used for learning. The conventional approach to teaching social studies offered by current methods textbooks perpetuates a textbook oriented teaching that does not serve the purposes of social studies in these changing times. (DB)

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THE ROLE OF LITERATURE AND WRITING IN SOCIAL STUDIES METHODS TEXTS - A CASE FOR CHANGE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

DRAFT of a paper to be presented at the New England Education Research Organization, April 1991, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

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The role of Literature and Writing in Social Studies Methods Texts - A Case for Change in Teacher Education

In the last fifteen years many vital changes have occurred in our views about teaching and learning, particularly in the uses of writing and literature in the elementary curricula. Researchers have shown that although writing can be used to show what one has learned, it can be equally effective when used a a tool of inquiry and reflection (Applebee, 1984; Britton et al., 1975; Langer and Applebee, 1987). Researchers have also shown that historical literature can be productively used in the social studies for learning concepts, skills and attitudes about history (Barnes, 1991; Huck, 1987; Levstik, 1989, 1990; Sebesta, 1989).

Writing across the curriculum is a widely recognized educational axiom, and with it, teachers are encouraged to have their students use writing to develop deeper and richer understanding of their content area subjects. Yet despite its recognition, there is a wealth of classroom observational evidence indicating that very little student writing actually occurs in content area classrooms (Applebee, 1984; Langer and Applebee, 1987; Goodlad, 1984;). Applebee (1984), in fact, found that in his study of 200 classrooms from across the country, 75% of the time students

only completed restricted kinds of writing in which they filled-in blanks, selected from multiple choices, or answered textbook questions by retelling what they remembered from reading. Furthermore, typical classroom writing assignments are selected for students by their teachers for the only purpose of demonstrating what students learned (Applebee and Langer, 1984). Thus a plethora of research studies indicate that very rarely do students write to explore, organize and refine their understanding of their subjects.

Traditionally there has been an overwhelming bias in Western society to value expository prose for learning over other forms of writing - narrative texts are thought to be inferior and less rationale in their representation of ideas (Olson, 1990). This bias for exposition is evident in the almost exclusive use of textbooks as the primary source for learning content area subjects. Yet textbooks are known to have many shortcomings, and social studies texts, in particular, have been shown to be uninteresting and unengaging for their readers (Graves et al. 1988). Social studies texts are also criticized for their survey approach to history as well as their characteristic imbalance when presenting major concepts and minor details (Welton, 1990). Furthermore, reading researchers argue that textbooks are written without regard to current findings from research in

linguistics and comprehension (Anderson and Armbuster, 1984,1986; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson, 1984).

Currently there is nationwide impetus to reform the elementary school curriculum and for teachers to change from a reliance upon textbook instruction to greater uses of literature for learning (Harste, Short and Burke. 1988; Goodman, K., 1989; Goodman, Y. 1989; Watson,1989). This movement to use literature to learn is evident not only in the language arts but also in the social studies (Barnes,1991; Sebesta, 1989; Hickman & Cullihan, 1989). Recently, Levstik (1990), for example, explains that by reading historical literature children become immersed within the period they are reading and are better able to interpret forces and moments which shape history. She argues that literature is a rich source for learning the perspectives of historical figures. Similarly, Huck (1987) recommends that historical fiction and biography be used to improve children's understanding of the past; through historical fiction children learn to appreciate and evaluate events and figures, and literature helps children comprehend the influences of events and periods upon modern society. Because of the recognized limitations of textbooks, as well as the enthusiastic recommendations for using literature to learn, many schools are already integrating literature into their language arts, social studies and other content areas.

Methods textbooks are widely used in teacher training and represent a persuasive influence on the ways teachers perceive teaching and learning in their disciplines. While teacher accreditation courses vary from state to state, eventually all teachers are required to complete methods courses. Methods texts are typically used for independent reading and serve as background information and extension of what is presented in classroom discussions. Given all the changes in our views about literature and writing to learn, we wondered whether methods textbooks supported or impeded change in teaching the elementary social social studies . In this study we specifically addressed the following two questions:

* What recommendations do social studies methods texts offer about using writing to learn?

* What recommendations do social studies methods texts make about using literature to learn?

Method

In this study we examined social studies methods textbooks to determine how writing and literature are presented to prospective teachers. We assumed that novice teachers use their methods texts to improve their teaching in the content areas; later as experienced teachers their methods texts may still be used as resources.

Five current social studies methods textbooks were examined (see Appendix). We only selected books published within the last five years and examined them according to their content, table of contents, indices, and illustrations for data relating to the questions of our study. We separately examined each of the texts and later compared our analyses for confirmation or revision. We first read the textbooks to discover their recommendations about literature, and then after we completed this analysis, we then reexamined the textbooks to learn how they recommended writing might be used in the curruculum.

To help focus our attention to how writing and literature are presented in these methods texts, we asked ourselves a number of questions. When examining the methods textbooks about the role of literature we asked ourselves the following: 1) Does the textbook recommend that literature be used as an information source? 2) Does the textbooks contain a suitable number of examples and activities? 3) As a result of using this textbook will a novice teacher use literature in social studies?

In a similar manner, when we later read the textbooks to determine how they treated writing, we asked ourselves the following questions: 1) Does the methods textbook discuss writing? 2) Are a variety of writing forms recommended in the textbook? 3) Is writing used to learn or

show? 4) As a result of using this textbook will a novice teacher use writing in social studies?

Results

Using Literature in the Social Studies Curriculum

We examined five methods texts to determine whether the authors recommended using literature as a legitimate source of information for learning social studies. Although all of the authors at least mentioned literature, we were primarily interested if the textbooks actually recommended that children read literature for learning about people, concepts, and events in the social studies curricula. To help discover the textbook authors' perspectives about using literature, we asked ourselves the following two questions:

* What kinds of reading materials do the methods text recommend when children study social studies?
* Do the textbooks propose that literature be used as an information source of learning social studies?

Depending upon the methods textbook read, beginning teachers would learn contrasting perspectives about the use of literature in the social studies curriculum.

Although each of the methods textbooks identify literature as a resource, not all of them offered a wholehearted endorsement for its use. In fact, this was rarely the case. Kaltsounis (1987), for example, only

identifies literature as one of many reading resources, and he offers no discussion for its use. Michaelis (1991) acknowledges that literature can be used for learning, and he even refers to a New York State Education Department document which recommends using literature throughout the social studies curriculum. Yet Michaelis only emphasizes literature's "..subjective outcomes, such as enjoyment and excitement..." (p,69). Van Claef acknowledged using literature in only a brief 150 word passage (p.324).

Banks et al. (1988) and Welton & Mellon (1988) are the only authors who substantively recommend that literature be used as an information source . Banks indicates that "...there is a goldmine of fiction that can be used to enrich social studies. When used properly, fiction not only makes the social studies more interesting, it provides the students with valuable insights into historical periods that cannot be obtained easily from textbooks and informational books..." (p.244). Similarly, Welton & Mellon recommend that "...historical fiction, biography, you name it - somewhere there is a tradebook that applies to whatever your class is studying..."(p.472).

Clearly there existed a reluctance or lack of consideration by 3 of the 5 authors to recommend using literature as an essential part of the social studies curriculum. Kaltsounis' textbook represented the extreme position in this regard. Despite the fact that there is

major controversy about the validity of information in American social studies textbooks, Kaltsounis (1987) fails to admit it and even argues that "...the new textbooks treat minorities and women fairly, but within the context of a balanced treatment of society..." (p.197). Kaltsounis's advises that teachers use textbooks and their manuals as the primary source of information for social studies classes; his methods textbook contains a plethora of information of how to use textbooks to drive elementary curricula and pedagogy.

Even when textbook authors advised that literature be used, their advice was typically embedded with disclaimers about possible biases or distortions of historical facts. It seemed that regardless of how timid a recommendation for literature might be, authors restricted its use. Michaelis, for example, cautions teachers that "...care should be taken to distinguish fact from fiction and to discuss deviations from reality..."(1988, p590). Even the text by Banks et al., which we believe to be generally positive in its treatment of literature, is guarded in its recommendations. Banks et al. argue that "...fictional works used in social studies should be carefully chosen and used only when this helps the central problems and questions raised in units and lesson. Their purpose in the unit or lesson should be clear to both students and the teacher...students should be helped to distinguish fact from fiction..." (p245).

Only one of the textbooks contains an uncompromised argument for using literature for learning. Welton & Mellon accomplished this recommending that teachers restrict the use of classroom textbooks. In fact, they argued against text-based methods of instruction. Although they acknowledge that textbooks may be used as a classroom resource, they treat textbooks pragmatically, and they caution teachers about their use. They explain that "textbooks have a way of becoming the basis for a social studies program, not a resource to be used with it..." (p. 468). They further explained the following:

> "...as much as we disapprove of totally textbook based programs, we also recognize that an identifiable basis is necessary, and that using a textbook may be a lesser evil for one's first year of teaching at least... and as a way of placating those people who think a course isn't worthwhile unless it has a textbook associated with it..." (Welton, p.469).

In sum, only two textbooks presented a positive perspective on using literature in the social studies. Banks does so in a guarded fashion, and Welton and Mellon do so enthusiastically.

Recommendations for Using Literature

We examined the textbooks to determine whether they provided specific examples of how literature might be used in the social studies curriculum. We reasoned that if the

textbooks writers viewed literature to be important for learning the social studies, then the textbooks would contain clear examples of how this might be accomplished. Consequently, we read the textbooks to determine whether the methods textbook authors identified specific tradebook titles and examples of how they might be used.

It quickly became evident that the textbooks in our study offered few examples of literature, and how literature might be tied to the social studies curriculum. Sadly, some of the textbooks did not provide any examples whatsoever. Others offered examples that were from much earlier times and seemed not to have considered more recent historical fiction and nonfiction. Van Claef, for example, proposed two titles, Little House on the Prarie (Wilder, 1935) and Call It Courage (1940), as his literature examples in social studies.

Several of the authors recognize that literature can be used in the social studies but their textbooks only contained a dearth of information for a novice teacher. For instance, Welton & Mellon (1988) only identify five books, which include both classic and contemporary titles, that fit with the social studies curriculum. They recommend other resources where titles might be identified. Despite the fact that Banks endorses literature in the curriculum, he offers only one example of contemporary literature. Similarly, Michaelis (1988) apparently recognizes the

importance of using literature, but he directs his readers to other sources, such as Social Education, to find it. Lastly, the Kaltsounis textbook noticeably omits any discussion of literature, specific titles, or activities.

Novice Teachers and Literature in the Social Studies

The results of our examination of these social studies methods textbooks reveal that in four out of the five cases, it is highly unlikely that a reader would develop an interest in using literature in the social studies curriculum. Although we credit Welton & Mellon's textbook as the only one of the five containing necessary information about the uses of literature, we also doubt that this is sufficient. Our acceptance of this text is in this regard a liberal judgment. The Welton & Mellon text contains a well treated discussion of the disadvantages of textbook driven instruction and how the curriculum can be improved with literature. Table I illustrates a summary of our analyses of how the methods textbooks treat literature.

Insert Table I about here

Methods Textbooks and Writing

We also examined the methods textbooks to discover their recommended treatment of writing in the social studies curriculum. We first investigated whether the methods textbooks discussed using writing in the social studies. Secondly, we examined them to learn whether the methods texts discussed using writing to learn, or whether they recommended that it be used to test, such as recall or summarization of text information. Thirdly, and similar to our analysis of literature, we evaluated whether novice teachers would use writing as part of their pedagogy after reading these textbooks.

Two of the textbooks, Kaltsounis (1987) and Welton & Mellon (1988) did not present any discussion of writing. Although the remaining three textbooks discussed writing, they varied considerably in the quality of their treatment. However, we found in general that their discussion of writing represented a more favorable treatment than literature.

Using Writing to Learn

Was writing discussed as a way to learn or did the authors advise that it be used primarily to assess children's knowledge? We found that all three of the textbooks discuss writing to learn. Michaelis (1988)

presents a strong perspective that writing can be used to learn the curriculum. He recognizes the reflective nature of writing. By composing, students not only better learn the information they are writing about, but by writing they also improve their writing skills. Michaelis explains, "...Writing activities improve learning and sharpen thinking in addition to extending and developing writing skills..." (p.324). Similarly, Van Claef (1991) recognizes the importance of using writing for learning. Van Claef summarizes how writing can be used for inventing, initiating, consolidating, clarifying and personalizing (p.327). Banks et al. (1988) also acknowledge that writing can be used for learning but their discussion is compromised by a recommendation that writing in social studies be done primarily to "reinforce language arts skills". Although Banks et al. acknowledge that writing is a form of thinking, their focus to use writing in social studies to primarily improving language arts skills really clouds the importance of using writing for thinking and learning.

Novice Teachers and Writing in the Social Studies

Certainly an author's acknowledgement that writing can be used for learning is necessary, but acknowledgement is not sufficient for instilling a desire and motivation that will make it part of beginning teacher's pedagogy. We

assumed that the methods texts needed to contain a variety of examples of how writing might be actually be used. To help us discover how textbook authors treated writing we asked ourselves the following questions as we read the texts:

* Is writing used to show what students have learned or is it also used as a tool for learning?

* Are a variety of writing forms recommended in the text?

We think that the textbooks by Banks et al. (1988) and Michaelis (1985) provided enough information for novice teachers to begin using writing in their social studies pedagogy. Banks et al.provide several pages of explanations of how writing can be used for learning the social studies. They explain that children can use written composition to write summaries, to synthesize information from varied sources, to analyze information to determine perspectives, point of view, validity of arguments, and distinguish fact from opinion. They offer five examples of activities that teach writing and thinking skills. They also discuss expressive writing and provide examples of simulated journals, letters, and so on. Michaelis's text offers the best discussion of how writing can be used to learn the social studies. His discussion is substantial and varied. It contains a variety of topics, activities and functions

for writing. The text offers specific lessons on report writing, poetic, and expressive writing.

Van Claef's textbook failed to provide varied and rich examples of how writing can be used for learning. Although Van Claef explains that writing can be used for learning, he offers no examples of topics and/or activities that might be used.

In sum, we found that several of the methods textbooks recognize and discuss how writing can be used for learning. However, we also found that only two of these texts provided sufficient explanations and examples for its use that beginning teachers would acquire an understanding of how to implement writing in their teaching. Table 2 contains summative illustration of the treatment of literature in methods textbooks.

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

We examined whether current methods textbooks recommended the integration of literature and writing for learning in the social studies curriculum. We assumed that the integration of literature and writing into the social studies would be a welcomed change from the text-drive

classrooms that have been described and documented in so many classrooms. We further believed that literature better presents the richness of human experience and is a vital information source for our children in learning about themselves, their communities, their traditions, and world. We further assumed that writing is not only a form of expression, but it can be an important tool for thinking and problem-solving. There is little doubt that schools have neglected both literature and writing in learning the social studies, and probably other areas. This is unfortunate in school from our experiences and now.

Only one of the methods textbooks in our study offered both a positive and informative explanation of how literature can be used to learn the social studies. The other methods textbooks contained limited discussions about literature. The majority of the textbook writers apparently believe that literature should be primarily used for aesthetic purposes and not to acquire information.

Writing fared a little better in these methods texts. Three of the texts recognized its importance, although only two offered sufficient information and examples of how it might actually be used for learning.

To conclude, we initially wondered why our schools and teachers are so wedded to textbooks for presenting the social studies to children. Our study suggests that part of the reason is because of the very methods texts that are

used in their pre-service teacher training. Yet we remain puzzled why methods texts are so conventional in their pedagogical recommendations. Certainly the elementary school curriculum is not bound to national or statewide testing demands that constrain social studies in the secondary schools, although we also doubt if testing is a sufficient reason to have text-drive instruction even in secondary schools. Furthermore, it's curious that given the many changes in the population of our elementary school children, particularly as our country becomes more racially diverse, that one classroom social studies textbook can adequately and fairly represent the experiences of people of European, African, Hispanic and Oriental descent.

Convention is one reason that methods textbooks do not foster using literature and writing to learn. We suspect that textbooks authors do not appreciate or understand how literature and writing can facilitate learning. We also perceive a ideological thread in methods textbooks where truth is thought to lie within classroom textbooks, and students need to reproduce it. Such a view, however, is outdated and does not serve our society very well. As our society increases in its ethnic and racial diversity the need to rethink our social studies curriculum and pedagogy becomes even greater. Our current social studies methods textbooks are impeding this change.

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Appendix

METHODS TEXTBOOKS EXAMINED IN THIS STUDY

Banks, J. & Clegg Jr. & Ambrose, A. (1988). Teaching strategies for the social studies: inquiring, valueing, and decisiong-making, (4th ed.). N.Y.: Longman.

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Figure 1

Methods Texts and Literature

	Lit. & Learning	*Titles & Activities*	*Use of Literature*
Banks	*Yes*	*No*	*No*
Kaltsouris	*No*	*No*	*No*
Michaelis	*No*	*No*	*No*
Van Claef	*No*	*No*	*No*
Welton	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*

Lit. and Learning: Does the textbook recommend that literature be used as an information source ?

Titles & Activities: Does the Textbook contain a suitable number of examples and activities?

Use of Literature: As a result of using this textbook will a novice teacher use literature in social studies ?

Figure 2

Methods Texts and Writing

	Writing in method text	*Writing & Learning*	*Use of Writing*
Banks	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Kaltsouris	*No*	*No*	*No*
Michaelis	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Van Claef	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*
Welton & Mellon	*No*	*No*	*No*

Writing in Method Text: Does the textbook discuss writing?

Writing & Learning: Is writing used to learn or show?

Use of writing: As a result of using this textbook will a novice teacher use writing in social studies?